

Chapter 3

Army Physical Readiness Training (PRT) Leadership

“The instructor must lose himself in his work, must demand precision, encourage here, correct there, reprove one man and boost another. In fact, he must so strive himself that his men will be proud of their leader in every way, proud of his appearance, proud of his ability, proud of his fairness, and proud because their instructor is helping to make their organization the best in the army.”

LTC Herman J. Koehler

Throughout history, the Army has always had confident leaders of character and competence. These leaders were developed through a dynamic process consisting of three equally important pillars: institutional training, operational assignments, and self-development. This process is designed to provide the education, training, and experience that enable leaders to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for success. Leaders at all levels clearly understand that PRT is fundamental to a combat ready force that must function in a full spectrum of operations. Over the last five decades, physical fitness training has evolved to a point where, due in part to a lack of clear and achievable direction, leaders at all levels have taken actions they have deemed appropriate to meet the needs of the Army. The results have often been a less than optimized approach to PRT, which has caused considerable frustration throughout the chain of command.

SECTION I – VALUE OF PRT LEADERSHIP

3-1.FM 3-25.20, Physical Readiness Training, is the Army’s basic manual on physical readiness. It provides an overview of Army PRT doctrine, including the principles for applying physical readiness theory at all organizational levels to meet operational requirements; and prescribes the requirements necessary to be physically ready in peace and in war. This manual applies to all Army leaders. Its principle focus is on leaders of soldiers at battalion level and below. FM 3-25.20 incorporates the nine professional military principles of training described in FM 25-101, Training the Force (Battle-focused training).

3-2.This chapter addresses the fundamental leadership expectations of:

- Demonstrate tactical and technical competence
- Teach subordinates
- Be a good listener

- Treat soldiers with dignity and respect
- Stress basics
- Set the example
- Set and enforce standards

3-3. The fundamental mission of our Army is to deter war and win in combat. It is expected that officers and non-commissioned officers will lead, train, motivate, and inspire their soldiers. Soldiers and units perform physically challenging tasks, everyday, as part of their duty missions. This manual provides a variety of physical training activities specifically designed to enhance military skills, which are essential to effective combat and duty performance. A serious effort must be made to develop in all of our soldiers an appreciation of how physical readiness training increases their duty performance. Physical readiness training is important enough to be included in the daily training schedules of every unit in our Army today. If physical readiness training is that important to us as an Army, then we should better understand its fundamental benefits: discipline, mental alertness, esprit de corps, unit cohesion and improved strength, endurance and mobility.

3-4. Leaders in our Army have a challenge. Army manuals have undergone cycles of change after major periods of armed conflict, reflecting the lessons learned from the soldiers who endured the rigors of combat. This manual addresses our physical shortcomings before painful lessons are learned in the next conflict. It does this by offering precise PRT leadership guidance.

SECTION II – PRT LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

3-5. The success or failure of the PRT program depends upon the quality of its leadership. Leadership is the process of influencing soldiers by providing purpose, direction and motivation. The best results can be obtained only if soldiers are motivated to extend themselves completely in strenuous physical activities and to make every effort to perform all exercises in the prescribed form. Only the best leadership can inspire soldiers to cooperate to this extent. For these reasons only the best-qualified soldiers in the unit should be selected to conduct instruction in physical readiness training. The PRT leader must exemplify the Army adage: Be, Know and Do.

3-6. The most essential quality of the PRT leader is the possession of abounding energy and enthusiasm. Military PRT activities, if they are to be successful, must be carried on in a continuously snappy, vigorous manner. Whether or not they are depends upon the leader. Soldiers invariably reflect the attitude of the leader whether it be enthusiastic or apathetic. The enthusiasm of the leader springs from the realization of the importance of his mission. Leaders must be inspired by the thought that what he does every minute of every day may mean the difference between life and death of some of the soldiers with whom he is working.

3-7. The PRT leader must have complete mastery of FM 3-25.20. Not only must he be able to explain and demonstrate all activities but he must know the best methods of presenting and conducting them. Mastery of subject

matter is the first step in developing confidence, assurance and poise. The PRT leader can apply the PRT program more intelligently when he understands and applies the Army PRT model which governs physical readiness conditioning for all soldiers. A thorough knowledge of FM 3-25.20 gives the PRT leader the ability to apply the training principles of progression, variety and precision necessary to attain soldier physical readiness. The well prepared, confident leader gains the respect and cooperation of soldiers at the outset. The unprepared, hesitant instructor loses the confidence and respect of soldiers almost immediately. It should be noted that the subject matter involved in PRT has become so extensive that additional training is required to master it. The PRT leader needs to understand the elements of preparation, activity and recovery and how training sessions in the toughening phase translate to progressively more complex training activities in the conditioning phase.

3-8. Successful leadership in PRT requires that the instructor understand human nature. He must appreciate the individual physical and mental differences of soldiers with whom he is working. He must learn to know his groups as individuals and he must be quick to recognize the signs which indicate their reactions to his instruction. The better he understands his soldiers, and the more he can see the physical training program from their point of view, the more his instruction will succeed. The successful PRT leader ensures that his subordinates understand the critical importance of PRT to the welfare of the unit. This is accomplished by understanding soldiers, knowing how to lead and motivate them, understanding how they learn, and the use of this knowledge in every PRT session. No PRT leader can be successful unless he has the confidence of his men. He gains their confidence by winning their respect. He wins their respect by his sincerity, his integrity, determination, sense of justice, energy, self-confidence, and force of character.

3-9. There is no more effective method of obtaining the energetic, wholehearted participation of soldiers in the PRT program than by providing skilled leadership. A leader who is admired and respected by his soldiers has no difficulty in securing their cooperation. The good leader informs his soldiers of the value of the different activities and the reasons for their inclusion in the program. He treats his soldiers with consideration and does not impose unreasonable physical demands upon them. If soldiers are exercised too violently, they become so stiff and sore that they look upon the next PRT session with apprehension. Soldiers develop an antagonistic attitude toward the instructor and the program, and instead of cooperating they will malingering at every opportunity. The personal appearance and physical qualifications of the PRT leader are related to his effectiveness. He should exemplify the things he is seeking to teach. It is a great advantage if the leader himself can do all and more than he asks of his men. He must be physically fit because PRT leadership is so strenuous that considerable strength, endurance, and mobility are essential prerequisites for successful work. Skill in demonstrating and leading all PRT activities is a necessary part of teaching technique, and is invaluable to the PRT leader.

“The American soldier...demands professional competence in his leaders in battle, he wants to know that the job is going to be done right, with no

unnecessary casualties. The noncommissioned officer wearing the chevron is supposed to be the best soldier in the platoon, and he is supposed to know how to perform all duties expected of him. The American soldier expects his sergeant to be able to teach him how to do his job. And expects even more from his officers.”

General of the Army Omar N. Bradley

3-10. Leaders responsible for scheduling and supervising PRT should take the following actions:

- Dedicate sufficient time for PTR (60-90 minutes). Avoid substituting other training or routine duties during scheduled PRT.
- Prevent the misuse of allotted PRT time by utilizing qualified personnel to supervise and lead PRT.
- Schedule and conduct PRT when it makes the most sense. PRT should not be reserved for the early morning hours and may be scheduled during or at the end of the duty day.
- Provide facilities and funds to support a PRT program that will develop physical readiness in all soldiers. Flat , grassy areas are essential for exercise drill activities. Lighted running tracks and marked fields are essential for movement drills and running activities. Dumbbells and pull-up bars are essential for strength development.
- Adhere to PRT schedules for the toughening and the conditioning phases.
- Provide for participation of as many soldiers as possible regardless of rank, age or gender during every PRT session.
- Adhere to training guidelines for individual, reconditioning, pregnancy, overweight, APFT failure and new soldiers.
- Utilize appropriate PRT formations.
- Utilize preparatory commands and commands of execution.
- Utilize cadence appropriate for planned activity.
- Require exercise leaders to lead and conduct activities with the soldiers to determine appropriate intensity levels.
- Require one Assistant Instructor (AI) for every 15 soldiers.
- Require AIs to supervise the execution of all PRT activities and make appropriate corrections.
- Soldiers requiring corrective training should be removed from the formation to receive appropriate instruction on precise execution from the AI.
- Require all soldiers to know the exercises by name, sequence and movement to ensure efficient use of time and precision of execution.

SECTION III – PRT COOPERATION

3-11. A successful PRT program requires the full cooperation of all soldiers. There can be no orderly movement of soldiers and units without a precise and unified effort. A soldier is a part of a team that works smoothly when every man plays his part. A soldier knows what to do in response to a command, as well as, what his fellow soldiers are going to do. His confidence in them grows until he feels as sure of them as he does of himself. This final result is teamwork. This teamwork is attained through the medium of drills. A drill consists of certain movements by which the unit conducts an activity with order and precision. This means that every soldier is trained to do his part with exactness so that on command the unit moves instantly, smartly and smoothly. Drill training starts the day a soldier enters the Army. In the beginning, he is taught the movements of his feet and arms used in PRT, marching and handling his rifle. He is trained in all these activities until he reaches a point where he does them automatically in response to a command. Then he is placed in a unit and trained to do all these activities together with the other soldiers. Finally, squads, platoons, and companies are doing drill smartly and with smoothness of machinery. The result is unified action – teamwork. The soldiers are at their best, inspired, with pride in themselves and their organization. This pride finds expression in perfect response to command.

3-12. PRT activities must be done accurately and intensively if they are to be of value. It is to mangle if an individual chooses to do so. Since it is impossible to force troops to exercise properly every effort must be made to motivate them to do so. The leader must convince soldiers that a high level of physical readiness will give them a much better chance to survive in combat

SECTION IV – PRT MOTIVATION

situations. When troops realize that their efforts are an investment in their own personal welfare it is not difficult to secure their wholehearted cooperation.

3-13. One method of motivating participation in the more formal PRT activities is to introduce competition. Exercise drills and running are activities about which soldiers are not particularly enthusiastic. They will engage in them conscientiously and vigorously when they compete against each other to determine which performs the exercises with the best form, or which executes the most repetitions of the exercises in a definite period of time. Another method of motivation may be the Physical Readiness Assessments found in this manual. Many soldiers are powerfully motivated to improve their condition when physical shortcomings have been revealed to them by the assessment program. Others feel challenged by the tests and strive to improve their score on the next one. Soldiers compete against each other to show the greatest improvement. Some commanders offer incentives to those soldiers with the best assessment scores. Others deny certain privileges to those soldiers who have scores considerably below the average.

All of these devices serve to stimulate interest and participation in the PRT program.

3-14. Commanders and leaders at all levels themselves may provide one of the best incentives by participating in the PRT program. When soldiers feel that their chain of command believes in PRT to the extent that they themselves regularly engage in the activities, they are motivated to greater effort. In addition, troops invariably develop a greater esprit de corps and respect for their officers and noncommissioned officers. The frequent use of soldiers as AIs serves as an incentive to many of them. They work hard for this honor and they usually respond well to the responsibilities.

SECTION V – SUMMARY

3-15. Effective leadership is essential to the success of any PRT program. PRT leaders are challenged with scheduling and executing programs that ensure individual soldiers and units are prepared to successfully perform their wartime mission.